

Over the past 6 years, I know him to be a man of vision and character. He understands the importance of fighting the extremists with all elements of national power. He is a good negotiator. It doesn't hurt that he can play a mean game of poker. *[Laughter]* As one of our Nation's—as our Nation's second-ranking diplomat, he's going to be a strong and confident advocate for our interests and, equally importantly, our ideals around the world.

John is going to build upon the work done by his predecessor, Bob Zoellick. Bob helped lead the State Department during a challenging time for our Nation. He upheld the high standards and the proud tradition of this Department. I appreciate his dedicated service.

As John takes up his duties, he's going to benefit from the talent and professionalism of the men and women in our foreign and civil service, folks who serve in this building and in our Embassies around the world. The work done here and the work done abroad helps sustain America's position; it fosters freedom and helps advance the cause of peace.

I want to thank you for your willingness to serve our country. I appreciate the sacrifices you make on behalf of the American people.

You're going to have a fine leader in John Negroponte. One thing is for certain: He knows we live in challenging times; we live in dangerous times. He also knows that this is a moment of great hope and opportunity. John's broad experience and sound judgment and unquestioned integrity will make him an outstanding Deputy Secretary of State.

And so, John, I thank you once again for agreeing to serve our Nation. Congratulations.

And now Secretary Rice will administer the oath.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:27 a.m. at the U.S. Department of State. In his remarks, he referred to former Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Deputy Secretary Negroponte.

## **Remarks Honoring the 2006 National Basketball Association Champion Miami Heat**

*February 27, 2007*

Thank you all. Please be seated. It is such a joy to welcome the NBA champs, the Miami Heat, to the White House. Glad you all are here. This is the Miami Heat's first NBA championship. I congratulate you on a tremendous achievement, even though you beat a Texas team. *[Laughter]*

I can assure you, however, then Governor Bush, the Governor of Florida, was thrilled, as were a lot of Florida fans. We've got a lot of members of the congressional delegation in the room. We got you a Senator here. We got Congresswoman Ros-Lehtinen, Alcee Hastings, Robert Wexler, Ander Crenshaw, Jeff Miller, Kendrick Meek, Ron Klein, and Tim Mahoney. Thank you all for coming.

Most importantly, we got members of the Miami Heat family with us today. I'm really proud of Micky Arison and Madeleine, who is with us, as well as Nick. As you know, I used to be in pro sports. I never had the pleasure of winning anything. *[Laughter]* Must be pretty cool. *[Laughter]*

I welcome Pat Riley, the president and head coach of the Heat. I welcome Randy Pfund, the general manager. I want to thank all the folks who make the organization run—the equipment people, the people that figure out how to get you to the plane on time, the folks who never really get much credit for making a franchise become a championship franchise. And we welcome you all here.

I want to say something to the spouses of the players: Welcome. You've got a tough life, in many ways, with your spouse on the road all the time, and you deserve as much of this championship as they do. And so we welcome you here to the White House as well.

All the fans who are here, thanks for coming. These players did something that they weren't supposed to do. Remember, they went into the Eastern Conference championship as the underdog. Nobody thought they could win. And then they get against the Mavericks, and they're two down—and 13 points behind with minutes remaining, 7

minutes remaining in the third game. In other words, they lose that game, it's over. They weren't supposed to win. And they did something no team has done in nearly 30 years, which is win four straight and become the NBA champs. And your fans are really proud of you.

This is a team with some of the NBA's bright stars. Dwyane Wade led the team in scoring—most valuable player in the finals. He was on the—sportsman of the year for Sports Illustrated. All it said was, Dwyane Wade plays to win. Unfortunately, he hurt his shoulder. I know a lot of NBA fans, whether they like the Heat or not, are pulling for Dwyane to get back into action. We wish you a speedy recovery.

Or take Alonzo Mourning. A lot of folks here in DC remember Alonzo Mourning. I don't know if the people understand it, but Alonzo had a kidney illness that a lot of folks said, "Well, he'll never get back on the court again." He not only got back on the court; he blocked a lot of shots—[laughter]—which helped this team become the NBA champ.

And then, of course, probably one the most well-known figures in the United States of America is a fellow that's hard to miss—[laughter]—a fellow Texan—[laughter]—big Shaq. He scored his 25,000th point in his career last night—or recently. And we congratulate you for that—last night, yes, last night. And—but he was an important figure in seeing to—seeing this team to the championship.

But as Coach Riley gave me—he said, "Just remember, the motto wasn't, 'Each star matters;' the motto was, '15 strong.'" In other words, it was a team effort that got these men here to the White House. Yes, they had the stars; everybody knew who they—who the stars are, but it was the capacity to play together, to put the team ahead of themselves, that enabled them to be here at the White House, saying, "Congratulations NBA champs."

And I appreciate very much—[applause]. So they asked Dwyane Wade—he was the fellow that was the Sports Illustrated man—he said, "We did this together." In other words, he recognized, in spite of the fact that he had a fine series, that he couldn't have done it without his teammates.

Pat Riley had a lot to do with this team playing as a team. A team requires a good, solid leader in convincing people to put the team ahead of themselves. And that's exactly what Pat Riley has done. I'd say he's accomplished. After all, he's won seven NBA rings, that's all. [Laughter] They asked him about this ring, and I think it's interesting what he said. He said, "I would have traded them all for this one." He cares about this team. And obviously, the players responded to his leadership.

But what impresses me the most about the Miami Heat is their work in the community. That's what impresses me about them. I mean, I'm in awe of their athletic skills. Standing next to Shaq is an awe-inspiring experience. [Laughter] But I want to share some of the stories of these players and what they have done in their communities.

Alonzo Mourning dedicated his entire salary from the Heat to charities that help low-income kidney patients and underprivileged youth. It wasn't 10 percent—[applause]. I would suggest not popping up on every story—[laughter]—because you're going to be tired. [Laughter] This is a giving team. [Laughter]

Antoine Walker founded the Eight Foundation to provide education and sports opportunities for inner-city kids in his hometown of Chicago. He came from Chicago; he's putting something back in the community from whence he came.

Dwyane Wade has given a lot of his salary to his church. He donates basketball shoes to a youth sports program at his alma mater, which happens to be Marquette University. He founded Wade's World Foundation, which gives children educational and social opportunities, such as the chance to spend the day at Disney World.

And then, of course, you've got the big man, Shaq. He works as a reserve police officer with the Miami Beach Police Department. He gives new meaning to the phrase, "the long arm of the law." [Laughter]

Heat players volunteer their time in all kinds of causes, ranging from reading to drug prevention to youth basketball. This is a championship team on the court, and this is a championship team off the court, and it

is my high honor to welcome to the White House as the NBA champs.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:52 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Gov. Jeb Bush of Florida; and Micky Arison, owner, Nicholas Arison, limited partner, and Shaquille O'Neal, center, Miami Heat.

### **Proclamation 8108—American Red Cross Month, 2007**

*February 27, 2007*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

The American Red Cross demonstrates the power of human compassion and embodies the capacity for kindness and generosity of this great Nation. This month, we honor the men and women of the American Red Cross who exhibit the spirit and character of America by serving others in need.

Since its founding in 1881, the American Red Cross has helped millions of individuals overcome the effects of natural disasters and emergencies by providing shelter, food, counseling, and other assistance. It plays an important role in our communities by helping maintain our country's blood supply, offering programs for youth and the elderly, supporting members of the military and their families, and promoting health and emergency preparedness. This inspiring organization helps improve the lives of those in need and continues to assist in the recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast.

The humanitarian mission of the American Red Cross extends around the world. My Administration is proud to work with it to support efforts to combat malaria, measles, HIV/AIDS, and other diseases that affect millions of people each year in Africa and throughout the world. The American Red Cross is committed to helping improve the prevention and treatment of diseases and is working to strengthen community health programs in developing areas of the world. These efforts help save lives and show the strength and generosity of America.

We are grateful for the tireless work of the volunteers and staff of the American Red Cross. During this month, we pay tribute to this remarkable organization and all those who have answered the call to serve a cause greater than self and offered support and healing in times of need.

**Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush,** President of the United States of America and Honorary Chairman of the American Red Cross, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 2007 as American Red Cross Month. I commend the good work of the American Red Cross, and I encourage all Americans to help make our world a better place by volunteering their time, energy, and talents for others.

**In Witness Whereof,** I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand seven, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-first.

**George W. Bush**

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:49 a.m., March 1, 2007]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 28, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on March 2.

### **Proclamation 8109—Women's History Month, 2007**

*February 27, 2007*

*By the President of the United States  
of America*

#### **A Proclamation**

Throughout our history, the vision and determination of women have strengthened and transformed America. As we celebrate Women's History Month, we recognize the vital contributions women have made to our country.

The strong leadership of extraordinary women has altered our Nation's history. Sojourner Truth, Alice Stone Blackwell, and Julia Ward Howe opened doors for future